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ROBERT S. PEABODY FOUNDATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGY

ANNUAL REPORT
1949

PHILLIPS ACADEMY

Andover, Massachusetts

January 3, 1950

Mr. John Mason Kemper
Clerk of the Board of Trustees
Phillips Academy
Andover, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Kemper:

The Peabody Foundation can report considerable progress during 1949. In general, the ambition to increase the knowledge of the archaeology of northeastern North America and to interpret its significance has been furthered by publication of work completed, by investigations in the field and by planned collaborative research with other institutions and among other scientific fields. Another archaeological field of interest, the Yukon, has also been of concern during the year. The analysis of field studies made in 1944 and 1948 has reached a preliminary stage. Committee work, occasional lectures, discussions of various kinds and other activities connected with the Museum or with archaeology and its parent, anthropology, have kept the staff busy.

It is to be lamented that Mr. Byers' illness has prevented him from working during the last few months of this year. However, he was able to carry on a summer's program in the field. Concerning this he writes ".....the Robert S. Peabody Foundation cooperated with the Robert Abbe Museum of Bar Harbor, Maine, in excavating an ancient camp site and fishing

station on the land of Russell Smith at Ellsworth Falls, Maine. This work was intended to provide a source of additional information, to supplement that gained on Wasp Island just across the river during 1948. The value of the site lies in the depth of the deposits which approaches four feet. Here objects left by earlier campers are found imbedded in silt which has accumulated over the years, probably as small annual increments following spring floods. Although levels of occupation were found at four distinct depths on Wasp Island, such was not the case on Smith Farm.

"The uppermost layers, separated in some instances by a band of sandy silt from the lower levels, contain tools and fragments of pottery of the sort made by Indians just before the discovery and exploration of the coast by the French. Below them are remains of pottery of the oldest type known in northeastern North America. Spears of chipped flint, some tools of polished stone, and rather crude scrapers and chips which appear to have been used in making objects of bone or wood are found at the lowest levels.

"As yet no means of dating the lower levels has been found, but it is obvious that Indians came here over a rather long span of time. Another season's work is contemplated, and this will be directed toward securing data which may help to gauge the length of the occupation of this fishing station."

During the year, preliminary steps were taken toward the formation of the Northeastern Anthropological Institute. The Institute is intended to be an organization without affiliation with or commitments to any existing museum and in which all institutions interested in work in the northeast may participate. This step will facilitate cooperation of a number of institutions without involving some of the complications regarding collections and rights of publication which are ordinarily encountered. It is anticipated that individuals or institutions may contribute funds to the Institute which will be organized under a trust agreement as a non-profit institution. It is anticipated that the head office of the Institute will be in the Peabody Foundation. Mr. Byers' illness has held up final organization of the Institute.

A primary need for the full development of the program of the Institute is a modern, detailed archaeological survey of the region. To commence this, a party was sent out during the summer to survey possibilities in Maine and the Maritime Provinces. The party traveled by pick-up truck along the courses of the principal rivers and about the lakes to examine likely-looking sites. Many locations producing evidence of Indian occupation were discovered. Some of these had never been recorded. It was also found that a great number of places had been flooded by dams for power or for lumbering or

The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the problem of the origin of life. It is shown that the problem is not only a scientific one, but also a philosophical one. The scientific aspect of the problem is concerned with the question of how life arose from non-life. The philosophical aspect is concerned with the question of whether life is a necessary part of the universe or whether it is a mere accident. The paper then proceeds to a discussion of the various theories of the origin of life. It is shown that the most plausible theory is that life arose from non-life through a series of chemical reactions. This theory is supported by the discovery of the fossilized remains of simple organisms in the Precambrian rocks. The paper then discusses the question of the evolution of life. It is shown that the evolution of life is a necessary part of the process of the origin of life. The paper concludes by stating that the origin of life is a problem that is still open to investigation.

rendered worthless to science by unscrupulous collectors. However, two sites of considerable promise were found. One of these is the remains of an Indian town visited by Champlain and it may be possible to find here the long desired tie between the archaeological series and historic records. Further work is contemplated during the summer of 1950. The second important site was located in New Brunswick, but no archaeological work on it is contemplated for the immediate future.

Other work in the field has been carried on in scattered localities; its implications are rather far reaching. The excavations at the Titicut site which have been reported to you previously have brought to light problems which are very difficult to solve. The hypothesis that the lowest level of occupation was of considerable antiquity has been the subject of lengthy investigation by Mr. Johnson and by geologists who have collaborated with him. During the summer, working under a grant of \$500.00 from the Foundation, Mr. Joseph Hartshorn of Harvard University undertook a geological study of the region including the Titicut site. This was directed by Mr. Johnson and by Dr. Kirk Bryan of the Department of Geology, Harvard University. Hartshorn's tentative conclusion was that the earliest occupation at the Titicut site was far more ancient than hitherto had been suspected. If further evidence substantiating this is found, it will eventually affect many ideas

concerning the population of the Western Hemisphere. The Foundation should support another season's work in the field so that adequate evidence for the extremely controversial hypothesis may be collected. Mr. Johnson has revisited the site on a number of occasions to check new information which has come to light. He has also spent at least five months of this year, in addition to a longer time previously, analyzing the collection of nearly four thousand stone tools in a manner which has never before been applied to such artifacts in eastern North America. Because of the size of the task and also because there is almost no precedent as to method, it is impossible to predict when this study will be completed.

In previous annual reports mention has been made of collaborative projects involving geological, archaeological and botanical researches. The published results of the studies of the Boylston Street Fishweir and Grassy Island have become an important part of the background for an informal, loosely organized and rather unique program of scientific investigation. At the moment a number of scientists, principally at Harvard University, are working on various aspects of the research. Some of these, such as paleobotany, do not appear to involve archaeological hypotheses at the present moment. However, it is planned that in the near future the results of this entire research can be applied to archaeological

research so helping to understand the human occupation of the region. The problem which is being attacked by this collaborative approach is wide in scope and it requires a considerable amount of thought and discussion by everyone concerned.

What might be termed an outbreak of activity in the field occurred in September and again in November. Between these two excursions, there was a period of careful study and discussion. Mr. Johnson, accompanied by botanists and geologists (the party in November included fifteen people) spent a number of days at a site near Provincetown. Here a shell heap, first discovered by Mr. Ross Moffett of Provincetown, lay below water level and underneath a layer of peat in a swamp. Work on the site involved the digging of a trench more than seven feet deep in the mud. This was kept dry with a gasoline pump and other paraphernalia. However, in spite of the difficulties which were increased by the freezing weather after Thanksgiving, it was possible to bring home an acceptable number of samples for several types of analysis. Though it is too early to make any statements concerning the significance of the work, the very location of the shell heap and the character of the peat which covers it is certain indication of its importance. It is probable that the rise in the water level which rendered at least a section of the shell heap uninhabitable is connected with the rise in sea level but the presence of fresh water

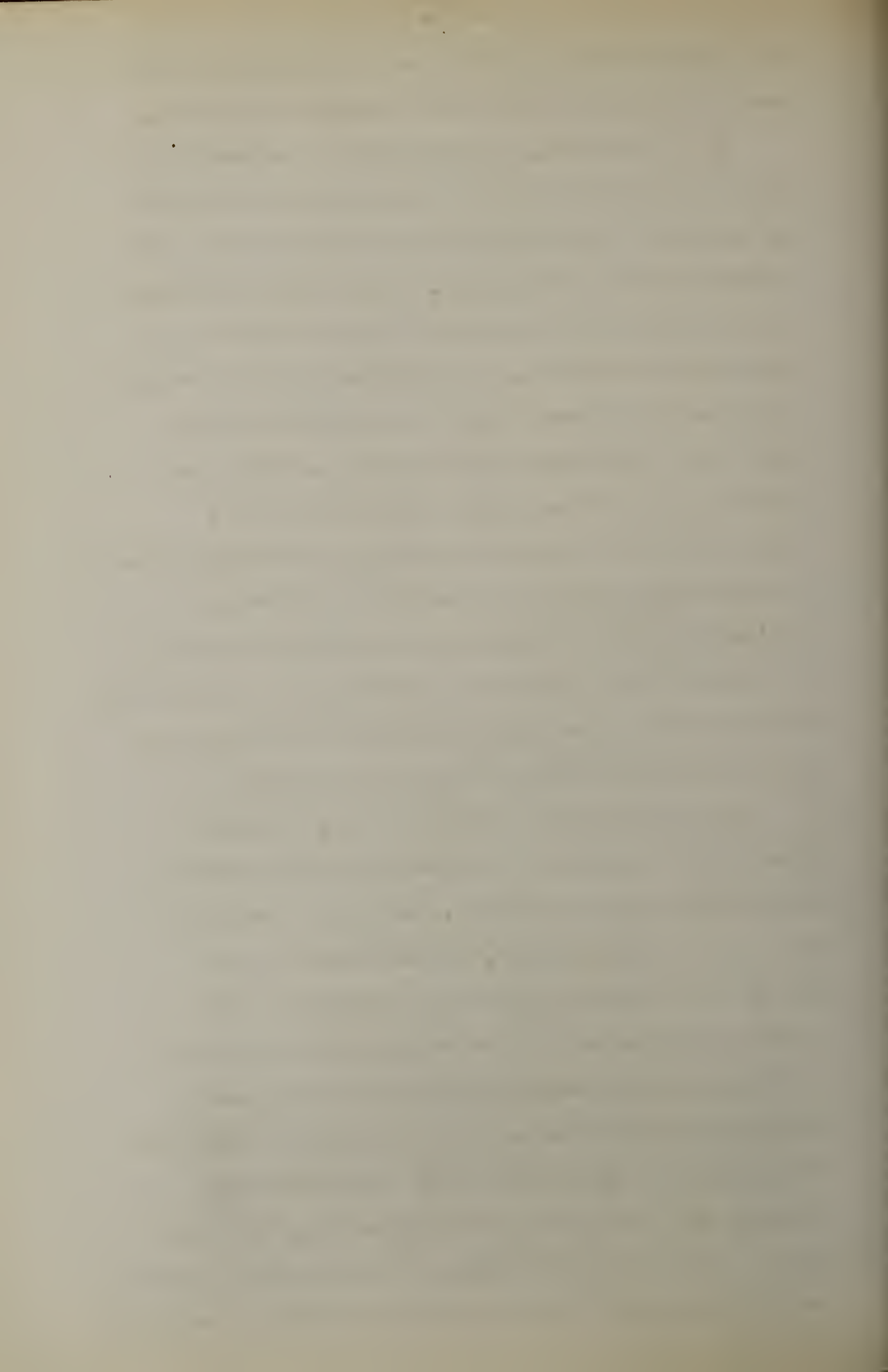
and a swamp peat complicates the problem. More work at the site, probably in the fall of 1950 when the water is low, will be necessary. After that the results of the analysis of the latest set of samples will have to be added to those already on hand and their significance determined before the inevitable report is completed.

Another item of interest is the discovery, by Dr. L. R. Wilson, Department of Geology, University of Massachusetts, of more than twenty corn cobs in an old channel of the Fort River in South Hadley, Massachusetts. Indian corn cobs of any kind are exceedingly rare in Massachusetts and these recently found are very remarkable. According to Dr. Paul Mangelsdorf, a widely known expert on corn, these cobs are the remains of a very primitive type of corn. Such cobs have been reported previously only from a single site in New Mexico. The site on the Fort River is believed by Dr. Wilson to be datable by geological means and by the application of pollen analytical techniques. Dr. Wilson has requested Mr. Johnson to do whatever archaeological work may be possible. As a result of an inspection of the site, there is some hope that a complicated and difficult excavation may bring to light some knowledge of the culture of the Indians who grew this primitive crop. With persistence and a certain amount of luck, we may eventually learn something concerning primitive agriculture in New England and

the length of time it took for it to develop to the stage discovered by the first European colonists.

As in the past, the Foundation continues in its policy of joining with its sister institutions for the purpose of assisting in the administration and advancement of anthropology. Mr. Johnson continues as secretary of the Committee for the Recovery of Archaeological Remains, as chairman of the Committee on Radioactive Carbon 14 and as a member of the Committee on Criteria for Selection of Sites and Buildings for Preservation. This latter is a committee of the National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings which has recently organized the National Trust incorporated by an act of Congress. In addition, the Foundation continues its connections with the Massachusetts Archaeological Society, Mr. Byers being the Editor of its publications.

Of special note, perhaps, is Mr. Johnson's appointment as Executive Secretary of the American Anthropological Association. With the consent of Mr. Byers and Mr. Kemper, the Secretariat was moved on November first to the Foundation. Mr. Johnson expects that by February 1950, the task of reorganizing the business procedures and general administration of the Association will be completed. This will be a major step toward developing the Secretariat, which is but two years old, into an office which will be of general service to all phases of anthropology. Once the period of reorganization



is over, it is anticipated that the job will not interfere greatly with Foundation affairs.

During the year the Foundation published "Excavations in Northeastern Massachusetts" by Ripley P. Bullen and "The Boylston Street Fishweir II" edited by Frederick Johnson. Also, a report on work done in west central Quebec by Mr. Edward Rogers under the auspices of the Foundation was accepted for publication in April 1950 by the Society for American Archaeology, Mr. Johnson published an article "American Archaeology, 1948" in July 1949.

The collections of the Museum have been augmented by about five hundred specimens from the excavations at Ellsworth Falls, Maine.

New volumes, 41 in number, have been added to the library in addition to 60 volumes received in exchange with other institutions. The collection, as it now stands, is essential for the work of the Museum and it is gratifying to note that more boys have been browsing among the books than ever before. It has been pointed out that the growth of the library will soon present a problem of providing shelf space. The foundation is grateful for Dr. Darling's interest in the library. He has arranged to have Mrs. Dorothy Bloom continue with the all important task of bringing the catalogue up to date. Mrs. Bloom and Miss Marie E. Carey, the Foundation's Secretary, have spent many long hours over the details which are so necessary if the

library is to be a useful and valuable tool to research workers and a place where casual readers can amuse themselves with profit.

Because of Mr. Byers' illness and practically irrevocable commitments made by Mr. Johnson early in the summer, Mr. Wilbert K. Carter of Harvard University was retained to teach the course on Anthropology to the class of twelve boys.

The faithful work of Miss Marie E. Carey must be mentioned. She has disposed of a great many of the details connected with the running of the Foundation efficiently and without complaint. We may add a word also in tribute to our janitor, Mr. Charles Schofield, who has taken care of Peabody House and the Museum and at the same time borne with extreme good humor the trials due to our erratic behavior.

An archaeologist cannot, or at least should not, definitely anticipate what the future has in store. The next scrape of a trowel may bring to light something requiring an untold amount of work or it may terminate a project before it has fairly begun. It is true, however, that much ground remains to be turned even in places which are known. Also, the gaps in our knowledge must be filled by searching for sites which can provide the missing information. The year 1949 has been a profitable one but we approach 1950 humbly for much which was begun has yet to be finished. Inevitably new problems will rise

from the old or spring full blown from some now unsuspected place. No matter what happens, there will be more than enough to do.

Respectfully submitted,

Frederick Johnson
Frederick Johnson, Curator

